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Viewing cable 06MANAGUA251, HERTY SEEKS CORDIAL, CONSTRUCTIVE, COOPERATIVE

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- The top box shows each cables unique reference number, when and by whom it originally was sent, and what its initial classification was.
- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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If you find meaningful or important information in a cable, please link directly to its unique reference number. Linking to a specific paragraph in the body of a cable is also possible by copying the appropriate link (to be found at the paragraph symbol). Please mark messages for social networking services like Twitter with the hash tags **#cablegate** and a hash containing the reference ID e.g. **#06MANAGUA251**.

Reference ID	Created	Released	Classification	Origin
06MANAGUA251	2006-02-02 18:59	2011-08-30 01:44	CONFIDENTIAL	Embassy Managua

Appears in these articles:

<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758456.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758467.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758468.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-30/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2758464.aspx>
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<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3966/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-ee-uu-en-el-2006>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2758764.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-23/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2758753.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4041/millones-de-dolares-sin-control-y-a-discrecion>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4040/la-ldquo-injerencia-rdquo-de-venezuela-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/4047/rodrigo-barreto-enviado-de-ldquo-vacaciones-rdquo>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotasSecundarias/Mundo2757239.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/NotaPrincipal/Mundo2746658.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2757244.aspx>
<http://www.nacion.com/2011-05-16/Mundo/Relacionados/Mundo2746673.aspx>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3991/dra-yadira-centeno-desmiente-cable-diplomatico-eeuu>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3968/pellas-pronostico-a-eeuu-victoria-de-ortega-en-2006>
<http://www.confidencial.com.ni/articulo/3967/barreto-era-ldquo-fuente-confiable-rdquo-para-eeuu>

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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHINGTON DC
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHINGTON DC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANAGUA 000251

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR WHA/CEN

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/02/2016
TAGS: [KDEM](#) [NU](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KCOR](#)
SUBJECT: HERTY SEEKS CORDIAL, CONSTRUCTIVE, COOPERATIVE
RELATIONS WITH THE UNITED STATES

Classified By: DCM Peter M. Brennan. Reasons 1.4 (B,D).

11. (C) Summary: Sandinista (FSLN) dissident Herty Lewites seeks cordial, constructive, and cooperative relations with the United States and will request a prestigious U.S. delegation attend his inauguration if he wins Nicaragua's November presidential election. In his recent meeting with Ambassador, Lewites voiced support for CAFTA and favored MANDPADS destruction. Lewites asserted that he and Montealegre need one other to move Nicaragua beyond its caudillo political culture. He warned of Supreme Electoral Commission (CSE) fraud, asserting that if Sandinista caudillo Daniel Ortega causes him to be disqualified from running for office, Lewites will give Ortega some of his own medicine by taking to the streets. In a fair election, Lewites estimates that some 40 percent of Sandinista voters and a number of independent and Liberal voters will vote for him. He is clearly fluent in the kind of "talk" that puts us at ease. Whether he will "walk" with us if he is elected is less certain, but possible; he is a pragmatist and a businessman. End Summary.

Talking the Talk

12. (C) In Ambassador's February 1 breakfast meeting with Sandinista dissident/presidential-hopeful Herty Lewites, a relaxed and confident Lewites was effusive in his desire to maintain cordial, constructive, and cooperative relations with the United States. Lewites shared that if he is elected, he will request a high-level U.S. delegation to attend his inauguration to demonstrate that the two governments will be strong allies. Lewites was unequivocal in his support for CAFTA, although he noted that small farmers must in some way be assisted. He also favors MANDPADS destruction, predicting that the remaining MANDPADS will be destroyed well before the November elections because they are of no good use to anybody. Lewites predicted, however that a strong, convincing case is in order to pass much-needed IPR legislation. Thousands of people earn their livelihood by selling illegal cassettes; better to go after the producers of these materials, not the street vendors, suggested Lewites.

CSE Manipulations Weaken Chance for Change Candidates

13. (C) Lewites -- who shared he will meet with Liberal dissident and presidential-hopeful Eduardo Montealegre later today to discuss their positions on Supreme Electoral Council (CSE) efforts to suspend Electoral Law articles 41 and 166 -- opined that they both face a "lose-lose" situation in the

Atlantic Coast elections. The two articles enable voters to vote at a voting station (JRV) near their place of residence even if they are not listed at that particular JRV. Removing these articles could swing the election outcome in favor of the "Danielistas," who control the voter registry, warned Lewites. Further, if Lewites and/or Montealegre boycott the March regional elections out of protest, they could be excluded from participation in the national elections. If however, they participate, and widespread fraud occurs, they will be complicit with the CSE and the precedent will be set to exclude these articles in the November election.

14. (C) Note: Articles 41 and 116 present advantages and disadvantages. Without Articles 41 and 116, a large number of voters could fall victim to the "raton loco" -- running around on Election Day to find where they are registered, as occurred in the 2004 municipal elections. In 2004, many Nicaraguans failed to find their JRV and could not vote. Unless scrutinized, the Sandinistas could move around on the list the voters sympathetic to Lewites or Montealegre as a means to limit their ability to find their proper JRV on Election Day, preventing many from voting, and tilting the election in favor of the Sandinistas. On the other hand, Articles 41 and 116 could enable a person to vote more than once, unless strong checks are in place to prevent this. According to Dionisio Palacios, former director of CSE's cedulaion (septel), in past elections some voters greased their fingers before voting, enabling them to wash off the supposed indelible ink after voting at one JRV so they could vote at another JRV later in the day. End Note.

Lewites Platform: Clean, Lean, Government with a Liberal VP

15. (C) Lewites outlined his platform: lead a clean, lean, and just government (he plans on bringing in a number of young technocrats); with cuts in government fat, raise the salaries of education, health, and other low-wage workers; support CAFTA and attract investment; establish four strategic food security/production centers in Sebaco, Bluefields, Jalapa, and Chinandega; promote tourism; seek non-fossil fuel energy alternatives with the help of foreign investment; construct two Atlantic-Pacific coast highways (North Atlantic and South Atlantic Autonomous Regions); and, help finance construction of middle and lower income family homes. To Ambassador's query over Lewites' VP choice, he smiled and replied that it will be a Liberal, a real surprise, but also reflective of the consensus government Lewites intends to lead. "The left are good at giving, but they do not produce anything, while the right produce but don't share. We need a balance of the two," explained Lewites. He expects to announce his running mate by April (we have heard that Liberal/former INTUR president Lucia Salazar could be Lewites' running mate.)

Montealegre and I Need Each Other

16. (C) Remarking that he will not be upset if Montealegre wins the election because he knows Montealegre will also lead the nation forward, Lewites argued that the two need one another to change Nicaragua into a serious and prosperous democracy. He believes that between the two of them they can gain the 56 National Assembly seats required for much-needed constitutional reforms. Lewites hopes to sign some sort of pre-election commitment with Montealegre agreeing to work together if either of them wins the presidency.

Lewites Counts on Modest Campaign Financing

17. (C) According to Lewites, all of his campaign financing so far is foreign, primarily from three Panamanian families (the Mota family has contributed some USD 1.5 million). He is also talking to Guatemalan, Salvadoran, and Costa Rican business interests and has received some support from Costa Rican food and cooking oils magnate Nacho Gonzalez. Lewites

estimated he will receive a total of about USD 5 million, a much more modest sum than his competitors. According to Lewites, Chavez is contributing generously to Ortega's campaign, and Ortega is using the funds to deliver foodstuffs to the most remote corners of Nicaragua. He presented no details, however, of Chavez' contributions. (Comment: Some Embassy contacts have alleged that Daniel Ortega's brother Humberto is the big bucks behind Lewites' campaign, but we have not seen evidence that supports this -- although he does have the Costa Rican connections.

18. (C) Lewites was unwavering in his response to Ambassador's comment that the Danielistas could attempt to disqualify him from running in the November election: "I will take to the streets if this happens." He asserted that he enjoys enough support to achieve this and will take this route if he is left with no other recourse.

Strike Hard Against Daniel, Lay Low on Sandinismo
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19. (C) Lewites opined that Ambassador's statements have been unusually strong from a diplomat but that this tough approach is required to get the message out. Nonetheless, he suggested that while the Ambassador and other officials continue to strike hard against Ortega, we should avoid condemning Sandinistas at large. This would help Lewites draw more votes from Ortega. He estimated that some 40 percent of Sandinista voters plus a number of independent and Liberal voters will vote for him.

BIO

110. (U) Herty LEWITES Rodriguez was born December 24, 1939 in Jinotepe, of a Jewish immigrant father and a Nicaraguan mother. He joined the struggle against the Somoza regime in 1958 and went into exile in Brazil in 1960. Lewites' brother Israel died in the Sandinista attack on the Masaya barracks on October 1977. Lewites was not involved in combat, but handled financial matters and arms smuggling. During the Sandinista regime he was a close ally of the Ortega brothers and served as minister of Tourism. He was elected to the National Assembly in 1990 and aligned himself with Sergio Ramirez' Sandinista Renovation Movement (MRS) against Daniel

Ortega's faction. He ran on his own ticket for mayor of Managua in 1996 and lost (the vote split the Sandinistas and the liberals won). Then in 2000, Ortega supported Lewites' campaign for mayor and Lewites won. After Lewites started removing corrupt municipal members associated with Ortega and Bayardo Arce, he fell out again with Ortega. He was expelled from the FSLN after he challenged Daniel Ortega to hold primaries to select the FSLN's presidential candidate.

COMMENT
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111. (C) Lewites is clearly fluent in the kind of "talk" that puts us at ease. Whether he will "walk" with us if he is elected is less certain, but possible, nonetheless. Lewites is a pragmatist and a businessman. His close ties with Israel and Jewish communities in a number of countries suggest he certainly will not toe the not uncommon leftist line against Israel and its ally the United States.
TRIVELLI